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PHILOSOPHY SERIES THREE

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NUMBER TWO of a Series of Seven

EXPERIENCING THE DIVINE

(KNOWING THE DIVINE WHEN YOU MEET IT)

HOW TO LOOK FOR GOD

Why Do We Assume The Existence Of God ... What Will Happen When You Meet God
How Will It Happen ... Some Cautions

Beloved Companion:

The monograph you received before this was a preparation for this lecture on Experiencing the Divine. This monograph too, is a preparation, and is divided into five parts, the first part being:

How to Look for God

A naturalist went into the Mayan forests to look for certain varieties of rare orchids. He took with him a none too capable assistant. The novice was sent out to seek and report the location of the flowers. He came back declaring there were none. The master then went to check his observations and found them in abundance. The novice had missed them because he did not know them when he saw them.

Did you ever try to distinguish between varieties of tissue or stained germ cells under a microscope? If your eye is not trained in seeing such things the slide will show only a few cloudy blurs. When you learn what to look for the distinctions are quickly and easily made.

The first time you try to look at the craters of the moon in a reflecting telescope you are likely only to see what looks like so many spider webs. But when your eye learns how to observe them you will see not only the craters but even the long lunar slopes leading up to them.

What you see, and whether you see anything at all, depends on whether you know what you are looking for and how to look. Many important discoveries have been missed and lost to the world in just this way. Those that have been made we owe mostly to the fact that someone knew not only what he was looking for, but how to recognize it when he found it.

The same applies in recognizing an experience of the Divine. Since God is universal and omnipresent, it is just about as possible to avoid contact with Him as to keep from being touched by the breezes or the sunshine. But being conscious of that contact is quite another thing. People miss God not because He is elusive, but because they are not alerted. This may happen not only because of not knowing how to look, but for either of two other reasons.

The first is the fact that the seeker may have a set of preconceived ideas about God; and unless he meets something that corresponds to them he thinks he hasn't met the Divine at all. Art and tradition have handed down some conceptions of God that represent very immature thinking. One who looks for Him in these terms is doomed to failure.

Most of them are what we call anthropomorphic conceptions - that is, ideas of God in human form. As someone has said, man has persisted in creating God in his own image. Naturally an infinite Spirit does not look like a man. We are told that we are created in the divine image, but that means that the Creator has placed in us some of His own qualities and powers. We are like God not because we look like Him, but because we share a measure of His nature. We are creative, we have the power to will, we are capable of love and goodness, and the like. These are parts of the divine image which we are honored to possess. When you meet God you may recognize Him by some of these qualities you share, but that will be the only resemblance.

In a study like this you will run into less confusion if, for the time being, you put aside all preconceived ideas of God. When you have completed your study you will be in a position to decide how many of them to take up again. You are entering the greatest laboratory on earth to make an investigation. A good researcher begins every investigation with a completely open mind, otherwise he could not depend on what he finds. If you build your idea of God out of your experience with God, you will have something of real value.

The second reason many miss the Divine is the fact that they lose their sense of wonder and let their daily experiences grow commonplace. They miss the miracle, though they spend their lives in the midst of it. They miss God because the divine presence in daily affairs has grown so familiar that they no longer notice it. Look more for the divinity in things. As Tennyson says, to know one flower in a crannied wall would be to know God and man.

II. Why Do We Assume the Existence of God?

Why do we talk about the Divine anyway? How came we to assume it? How does anyone know God exists? No one has ever seen Him. No one has ever offered logical proof of His existence that all would accept.

It is true that no one has seen God, but neither has anyone seen love, or electricity, or ether. Science has now led us about to the edge of what can be seen, and the laboratories are now working with things that cannot be seen. It begins to look as though the research and discovery of the future would be in realms the eye cannot pierce.

It is the same with sound. The human ear is sensitive only to a limited range of vibration frequencies. A dog can hear sounds made by higher frequencies. This can be proved by blowing a dog whistle producing vibrations so rapid that you hear no sound whatever, yet your dog will hear and answer it. Sight and sound, then, have many possibilities beyond our reach. An eye that could see God or an ear that could hear the music of heaven may be possible, only in our present situation we do not happen to have them. It may be that the human race did have them at one time and lost them through non-use. At any rate the fact that we cannot see God proves nothing. Much more reality lies beyond our vision than within it.

We cannot prove God by logic either, and it would mean little if we could. Formal logic is no sure and final criterion of anything. It is only an aid to careful thinking. Intentionally or unintentionally, it can be and often is misused and misinterpreted. A clever manipulator of premises can prove much untruth by logic, while many things we know to be true cannot be proved by it.

One of the best indications of the presence of God in the universe is the existence of so many things only such a being could do. If we see a house we assume it had a builder. If we see a machine we assume there was a maker. If we see a patterned fabric we assume a loom and a weaver. Not to do so simply would not be sensible.

Think of the universe, of its extent, of its far galaxies of stars, of its solar systems still in process of formation, of its bright points of light which are suns far vaster than ours. Think of the way these great bodies are balanced, each in its course and position. Think of our amazing earth and of the countless miracles taking place upon it. Would it seem sensible not to assume a planner and builder. If we cannot see God, we certainly can see what He has done.

Not long ago, in an atomic laboratory on the West Coast, the meson, a short-lived unit of energy, was separated from the atom for the first time. Now the meson cannot be seen, nor can the atom, though we talk much about them these days and no one doubts their existence. How do we know they exist? Only because we see their tracks on photographic films. No one can see an atom explode, but we can see the star-like images showing where the parts of one have flown in various directions.

No one ever saw an atom, but the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have no doubt whatever about its existence, for they have seen a manifestation of its power. We have seen vastly more and greater manifestations of the power of God than that of the atom. Indeed the atom itself, with its amazing and incalculable energy, is one of them. It would take a strange mind to deny the atom because it is unseen, or to reject God in a universe so full of His handiwork.

Visitors to the mountains and valleys of the West sometimes see great lizard tracks hardened by time into the walls of canyons or mountain-sides. They never saw a dinosaur, but they know by these tracks that such has been. Some of the tracks made by the wheels of covered wagons in pioneer days are still hardened in the deserts they crossed. We know by them that rugged men have passed that way. The march of God has left a shining trail across the ages. Who can see it and not know who has gone that way?

Stop and look out your window. Think on what you see in yard, garden, or field. There are shrubs, and grass, and flowers, and crops, being pushed through the soil by an invisible power. It is building them from the ground in which they grow. It started them from little seeds. So, through the ages, life has been pushing up out of the earth. The earth has known how to nurture it, and it has known how to grow according to its kind. Neither ever makes a mistake. Can you not see that some intelligent power is doing that, that everything, even the world itself, is growing out of some infinite creativeness? That creativeness is universal Spirit - God. You are face to face with it everywhere you turn. It shapes history just as it shapes things in nature. It would be rather strange, wouldn't it, as we are rational beings, if we did not assume the existence of God?

III. What Will Happen When You Meet God?

In a way this question is superfluous. You have met God many times already, in fact every day of your life. What happened then? Nothing, did you say? Oh how mistaken you are!

You saw Him make the grass grow, the flowers bloom, the harvests ripen, the skies moisten the thirsty earth with rain. You saw Him lay new-born children in loving arms. You saw Him working with you in your own life, helping YOU when you needed help, guiding YOU when you would follow. YOU saw Him holding the stars in place and keeping our planet moving on in its appointed path. You saw Him taking dead clay and turning it into living plants. You saw Him move into human minds and hearts and waken great and worthy purposes there. Never say nothing happens, for every time you open your eyes on God's universe things happen that the wisest men have never yet been able to explain or understand.

We are sometimes warned from the Scriptures that we must prepare to meet God. The assumption seems to be that we will meet Him when we die, and that we must each be ready to do so in peace.

What a pitiful situation it would be if we had to live all these earthly years without ever being near to God at all, and if we met Him only when this earthly phase of life is finished and we pass into the Beyond! We shall doubtless meet God when we come to make that transition, but that will be nothing new. We will only be meeting One we have met every day on earth. About the only difference that is likely will be that we may have better means of seeing and knowing Him. This series of lessons is a reminder that we must learn better the importance of the life that now IS, and understand that the experience of God is not something to wait for but something to realize and enjoy.

Is this the only way you can meet God? No, but it is one way, and when you come to understand this fact you will better realize what a wonderful life you are living and in what a wonderful world you are living it. To learn that you have in God a great and constant Companion is already to have had a marvelous experience.

The purpose of this series of lessons is, however, to try to open the way to something more than the usual everyday experience of the Divine. We have emphasized the usual experience because one is not ready for the unusual manifesta-

ion until he has learned to recognize the usual one. Two other steps are possible.

The first is to cultivate a stronger spiritual perception of the Divine as you already know it. However well one is doing anything, he can always do it better if he will try. He can cultivate greater strength of muscle, greater skill of hand, greater endurance of body, greater facility of mind, greater power of perception by any of the ordinary senses.

If, for instance, you can see a distant tower, you can so improve your eyes that they can see it better. If you add to the power of your eyes the assistance of field glasses or a telescope, you increase your power to see the tower still more. One can do this even more definitely in connection with sensing God, for the spiritual senses are as a rule more neglected and at the same time less limited in the possibilities they can attain. The person who keeps trying to know the Divine more positively will be amazed at the progress he can make.

One caution might be sounded. Always keep a clear sense of the fact that YOU are the human in search of God who is the DIVINE. What one sees with a telescope depends on whether he places himself at the large end or the small one. If you keep to the small end you will see a magnified Divine. If you place yourself at the large end you will perceive a God who is dwarfed and unsatisfying. If you have found the Infinite to be disappointing this may be all that is wrong.

The second step is the more unusual one, of course. I refer to the special meeting with God that comes to chosen people at chosen times and in chosen places. There come times in human history when the Infinite has special reason for manifesting Himself to special people. Later in this lesson course we shall notice some of these people and their experiences in a detailed way.

Of course it cannot be guaranteed that this step is for you, or for any one of us. Neither is it certain that it is not. It depends on whether you are or can make yourself the indispensable person in some of God's great plans. All you can do is to go on in your course of duty, development, and cultivation of keener perception of the Divine, and let happen what will. However much or little may result, it will be of unmeasured meaning and value.

IV. How Will It Happen?

When the moment comes for your manifestation of the Divine, how will it happen? This question cannot be answered definitely, because it happens differently with different people, and your experience will probably be more or less unlike any other ever known. We can, however, indicate some things that are likely to be true of it and that may help you recognize it.

Do not think any manifestation of the Divine must be violent in order to be real. The Bible tells of one who was expecting such an experience. There came an earthquake, but God was not in it. Then there came a fire, but God was not in that. Then there came a still, small voice - and God was in the voice. Why was it still and small? Because it was within the listener himself. That is the place to watch and listen.

That is because any experience of the Divine you have will probably be what the psychologists call extra-sensory. That is, it is unlikely to come through any of the ordinary physical senses, for they are too weak and limited to carry such impulses. They are for the ordinary affairs of life, not the great universal ones.

We are equipped with special inner senses for such matters as this. The world does not know too much about them yet, though science is learning and announcing more about them every little while. Remember that YOU can use these "organs of the soul", whether you understand them or not. People were seeing and hearing long before anyone had made a special study of the eye or ear.

Sight and hearing are only reactions of certain areas of brain centers to stimulation. Artificial stimulation will or can, produce the same effect the natural stimulation of light and air waves will. ANYTHING that produces the necessary effect on the right areas of brain cells will cause the sensation of sight or hearing. In certain conditions of mental disease these things occur as hallucinations. In other quite normal ones some more than human force stimulates these brain areas to see visions or become conscious of words that have definite meanings. Dreams, visions, and voices from the unseen have played a part in these inspirational experiences in all ages. If they are good it seems proper to assume that they originate with God.

There are always some who scoff at the idea of God speaking to us in dreams. Not all dream experiences are revelations from God, of course, but the Bible indicates that some of them are. Like all visions, they are usually symbolic, and have to be carefully interpreted. In the ancient days some men, like Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon, became very skillful in the interpretation of dreams, like competent psychiatrists often are now.

Does it seem ridiculous that God would ever speak to you in a dream? Perhaps it is if you are capable of getting His meaning any other way. But if you were in His place, and you have something very important to say to some son or daughter who could not or would not hear, would you reveal it in a dream or not? You probably would. However, if you do have an occasional dream that seems to have a meaning, be very careful to interpret and use it rightly.

Perhaps no such thing will ever happen to you, and the only voice you will ever hear will be that of silence. That may be just as well. Sometimes friends who sit or walk in silence understand each other even better than those who hold conversation. Think and feel your way into the Divine Presence and wait, then accept whatever good happens.

Spiritual perception is likely to be especially strong in children. Wordsworth tells us how heaven with all its splendors lies about us in our infancy, but how "shades of the prison house begin to close upon the growing boy." As we grow older we are likely to let material interests get in the way and dull these spiritual perceptions. Try not to let that happen, but to keep the sensitive and responsive heart of a child. Perhaps this was one of the things the Master meant when He said of the children that "of such is the kingdom of heaven."

V. Some Cautions

Do not think that all this can be done in a day. It is a monumental pro-

ject you are undertaking. Little things can be done in a little while, but this is no little thing. It is the most important thing you have ever undertaken, and it requires the same patient effort as does the MASTERY of any other important area of understanding. The human race has been a long time forgetting how to contact God and a long time losing the power to do so. GETTING these powers back is also going to take time and patience. It is the greatest present human need, and if YOU are successful in the effort you will be one of the pioneers in REPOSSESSING our lost spiritual boundaries. What if it does take weeks, months, or years? YOU WILL BE WELL REPAID.

Remember that a task like this requires concentration. You cannot do it with a dull or confused mind. If you let your thoughts wander or your purposes scatter you will fail. Put your mind firmly on your objective and drive ahead.

Do not measure any experience you may have of the Divine with any other one of which you ever heard or read. Do not seek someone else's experience. Seek your OWN. Yours will probably be different, because YOU are different, which is as it should be. God's purposes for you are not the same as for someone else, and nothing can be gained by trying to have it so. In this as in other things, be yourself.

NEVER give up. To do so will set you farther back than you were in the beginning. Remember that giving up, weakens your strength of purpose, while refusing to do so STRENGTHENS it. Do as the runner does - keep on with increased determination when the going gets hard. If the goal is worth the effort, then make the effort. Remember that God will always occupy as large a place in your life as you make for Him. Your part is to keep enlarging the space. He will do the rest.

Keep humble about any experiences that come to you and any privileges they may open to you. Vainglory will only neutralize your present blessings and close the way to more. Notice that the greatest and wisest people are invariably the humblest in spirit. Those who have really had great experiences of God have always been too busy living up to them to boast about them or claim special distinction because of them.

Do not try to impose your experience on others. Remember that theirs must be different even as yours has been. They must be themselves too. If the Divine One has blessed you others will notice it. If there is something about it they desire they will tell you so. If they want counsel on how to find the way, give it to them simply, humbly, and unselfishly, and let it go at that. The main thing is to concentrate on living it.

There are dangers along any road, even a good one. You can get off on detours and you can misinterpret signs and duties. Your protection will ALWAYS be that you are seeking the best your life can know. This will strengthen you against the temptations that beset even those who seek the Divine.

A family moved into a new community. Gossips, triflers, and idlers came to call. Some were even malicious. They were all unheeded. The new-comers wanted for friends some of the good people the gossips had slandered. They cultivated

their companionship, won them for friends, and the low-minded ones troubled them no more.

You may not be able to keep away all the unworthy influences that will ask for a hearing, but as you concentrate on your search for the highest and best they will lose interest in you and leave you alone. Evil does not waste much time with one whose supreme desire is good.

When, soon or late, you discover the Divine, you will find that it was not through distance but through attitudes that you have journeyed. Your travels will have been measured only in changes in consciousness. Paul speaks of a seventh heaven. The first one is only a thought away, and the seventh and any others there may be are probably no farther than the first.

The experience you seek may come at the most unexpected time and in the most unexpected way. You will probably say, "Why I cannot quite realize that it has happened, BUT IT HAS."

— The writer of this lesson tried for years to find the end of the rainbow, and finally decided that it could not be done. Then one day after a summer shower he found himself standing right in it. He had never been able to catch up with it, but one day it came to him. It was a glorious experience, but not so much so as suddenly discovering one's self CONSCIOUSLY IN TOUCH with the DIVINE.

The only instruction that can be given a student of anything is to KEEP ON. Gradually the pattern will fit together, the mists clear away, and the meaning of things become apparent. No matter how or why. The important thing is that it is SO. KEEP ON!

Vade Mecum Volventibus Annis,
Your Class Instructor.